DISNEY • PIXAR PRESENTS

"HOPPERS"
PRODUCTION INFORMATION

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KEY INFORMATION AND CREDITS

Directed by:	Daniel Chong
Produced by:	Nicole Paradis Grindle, p.g.a.
Executive Producers:	Pete Docter, Peter Sohn, Kiri Hart
Story by:	Daniel Chong, Jesse Andrews
Screenplay by:	Jesse Andrews
Original Score by:	Mark Mothersbaugh
Story Supervisors:	John Cody Kim, Madeline Sharafian
Edited by:	Axel Geddes, ACE
VFX Supervisor:	Beth Albright
Production Designer:	Bryn Imagire
Animation Supervisor:	Alon Winterstein
Directors of Photography:	Jeremy Lasky, Ian Megibben
Sound Designer:	Ren Klyce
Casting by:	Kevin Reher, CSA, Natalie Lyon, CSA, Kate Hansen-Birnbaum, CSA
Lead Story Artists:	Hannah Roman, Margaret Spencer
Genre:	Animation, Comedy, Adventure
Release Date:	March 6, 2026, in theaters
Rating:	PG
Run Time:	105 minutes

Original Song "Save The Day"

Performed by:	SZA
Lyrics by:	SZA
Music by:	SZA, Rob Bisel and Ben Lovett
Produced by:	Rob Bisel and Ben Lovett

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In Disney and Pixar's all-new animated comedy adventure "Hoppers," animal-lover Mabel (voice of Piper Curda) seizes an opportunity to use a new technology to "hop" her consciousness into a lifelike robotic beaver and communicate directly with animals. As she uncovers mysteries in the animal world beyond anything she could have imagined, Mabel befriends charismatic beaver King George (voice of Bobby Moynihan) and must rally the entire animal kingdom to face a major imminent human-threat: smooth-talking local mayor Jerry Generazzo (voice of Jon Hamm). The all-star voice ensemble also features Kathy Najimy, Dave Franco and Meryl Streep. "Hoppers" is directed by Daniel Chong and produced by Nicole Paradis Grindle, with an original score by Mark Mothersbaugh. The film opens exclusively in theaters on March 6, 2026.

ABOUT PRODUCTION

"Hoppers," the outrageously original action-packed comedy from Disney and Pixar Animation Studios, uncovers the beautiful and wild world that exists in our own backyard. Directed by Daniel Chong ("We Bare Bears") and produced by Nicole Paradis Grindle ("Incredibles 2"), the attention-grabbing feature uncovers secrets of the animal kingdom in an innovative yet distinctly Pixar way.

Mabel Tanaka (voice of Piper Curda), a fiery and passionate animal-lover, has a deep personal connection to the tranquil glade she would often visit with her grandmother. It's the one place in her hometown of Beaverton where she can go to feel calm and grounded. Mabel is outraged to discover that the glade is under threat thanks to local mayor Jerry Generazzo (voice of Jon Hamm), who plans to build a new stretch of highway through it as part of his bid for reelection. As she looks for ways to take action, Mabel learns that her college professor, Dr. Sam (voice of Kathy Najimy), and her colleagues have figured out how to "hop" human consciousness into lifelike robotic animals and communicate directly with wildlife. Mabel jumps at the chance to use the top-secret technology for her mission and "hops" her mind into the body of a robotic beaver.

As she explores the many wonders of the animal kingdom as a beaver, Mabel meets a host of new animal friends, including the larger-than-life, jovial beaver King George (voice of Bobby Moynihan), the leader of the pond and king of the mammals. With the help of King George, Mabel works to unite the entire animal kingdom as the wild and unexpected comedy adventure unfolds.

“The thing that always guided us was the comedy and the characters,” explains director Daniel Chong. “That was what we chased the hardest. We knew it was our team’s strong suit, and we made sure early on to establish a unique comedic tone with fun characters to build everything on.”

“A story like this, with characters arguing constantly, has to be funny,” agrees producer Nicole Paradis Grindle. “We wanted it to have emotion and feature a ton of action too. It’s even a thriller when you get to the final scenes. But the humor was the initial key, since it brings people in. It’s an amazing story to tell in animation, this idea that we can see into that animal world and enjoy animals, as animals.”

Lead story artist Hannah Roman says, “It’s a very absurd and fun comedy with a heart. We had a good foundation from the beginning, and that never changed.”

Bobby Moynihan, who voices King George in the film and is a longtime collaborator of Daniel Chong’s, agrees. “It’s a Pixar movie, but it’s Daniel’s Pixar movie. It really showcases what he does best, that there is hope in the world and that there are good people out there who want to build community and bring people together. It’s beautiful, funny and hopeful.”

Chong, who has a long-standing relationship with Pixar that extends back to the original “Inside Out,” was thrilled to have the chance to pitch the idea that would eventually become “Hoppers.”

“‘Hoppers’ exists thanks to Pete Docter,” says Chong. “Years ago, I worked with him on ‘Inside Out’ as a story artist, then left to create my TV show ‘We Bare Bears.’ Pete and I had kept in touch, and when the show was over, Pete invited me back to direct something; coming back, it helped a lot that we had already worked together, and that I already knew the Pixar process.”

Chong continues, “I pitched three movie ideas, and ‘Hoppers’ was the one I was pretty certain they would never go for. It was so strange and goofy–I barely took the idea seriously. But I think people saw what the movie could be, and that there was a really interesting concept at its core.”

When Chong initially conceived the idea, beavers weren’t a focal point of the story. “I had this fixation with penguins for some inexplicable reason, and was determined to make the movie about them. But Pete didn’t feel the world needed another penguin movie. He was right, of course,” he explains. “As I continued to develop the idea, I came across a story about how Yellowstone National Park had rewilded their ecosystems with wolves after they had all disappeared. Their reintroduction began to rebalance things–leading to other animals returning, including beavers. And once beavers returned, and built their dams and ponds, a giant wealth of animals and plants returned. They are often referred to as ecosystem engineers.”

From there, everything began to fall into place.

“Beavers are a keystone species that can sustain wildlife in the most unique way, and it became very obvious that they would be the perfect vessels for the movie to tell this story–they are also super cute and round!” Chong adds. “In our research, we also noticed that people are starting to recognize what beavers can do–and their impact on their habitats–by just doing their thing, and it’s remarkable. These little guys deserve to be stars.”

“It’s entertaining first,” adds director of photography Jeremy Lasky. “It has a depth to it that comes out the more you think about it, but it is really, solidly entertaining.”

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND VOICE CAST

“Hoppers” features an incredible cast of characters that bring the hilarious and heartening story to life, which meant the filmmakers needed to line up an impressive roster of voice talent to match. Once again, humor was at the forefront of their minds.

“The number-one thing with all the actors we hired, no matter what, was they had to be funny,” says Chong.

The remarkable voice ensemble includes Piper Curda (Mabel), Bobby Moynihan (King George), Jon Hamm (Mayor Jerry Generazzo), Kathy Najimy (Dr. Sam), Dave Franco (Titus), Eduardo Franco (Loaf), Aparna Nancherla (Nisha), Tom Law (Tom Lizard), Sam Richardson (Conner), Melissa Villaseñor (Ellen), the late Isiah Whitlock Jr. (Bird King), Steve Purcell (Amphibian King), Ego Nwodim (Fish Queen), Nichole Sakura (Reptile Queens), Meryl Streep (Insect Queen), Karen Huie (Grandma Tanaka) and Vanessa Bayer (Diane).

King George (Bobby Moynihan)

One of the first roles cast was Bobby Moynihan as the voice of the undeniably optimistic beaver King George. Chong and Moynihan had worked together previously on the popular animated series created and directed by Chong, “We Bare Bears,” where Moynihan voiced one of the three leading roles for nearly 140 episodes.

According to Chong, “I feel so lucky to reunite with Bobby on this movie. We worked for six years together on ‘We Bare Bears,’ so we already had a built-in comfortability. Having him by my side was such a grounding thing and made directing this gigantic movie feel not so daunting. It felt like we just picked up where we left off. Everyone knows Bobby’s hilarious. But on top of all that, he has this undeniable sweetness and earnestness in his voice you just root for–and makes you love him. But he can also play it very broad and zany too. His ability to balance these things is what makes him such a talented and brilliant performer.”

“King George was a privilege to write,” says screenwriter Jesse Andrews. “He believes everyone is good. And it’s not because he’s stupid. He's surprisingly smart and insightful even though his attitude is a bit naive.”

For Bobby Moynihan, being a part of “Hoppers” was a joy. “I’ve been a fan of Pixar since the beginning, and it’s absolutely wonderful to be a part of this film,” he explains. “And it’s great to get to do it with a friend. Experiencing this with Daniel has been absolutely mind-blowing. He’s so genius when it comes to world building and character building. It’s so new and different and unique. I feel like the luckiest boy in the world.”

Mabel (Piper Curda)
Developing Mabel’s character presented a separate set of difficulties.

“Mabel’s character was one of the biggest challenges,” says Chong. “She’s unpredictable, loud and combative–she’s a fighter. Some of her traits can come across as a bit intense. Finding a way to make that personality palatable for everyone took time to shape. She was on the wilder side to begin with–a bit more outrageous and overly bombastic. The hard work from there was finding ways to ground her more. And then when Piper Curda came in to record, we navigated a lot of that with her as well. We workshopped a lot of angles to try and find the right tone and attitude that made sure you were still on her side. Piper walks that line perfectly, and she makes you just love Mabel."

“A lot of Mabel’s character is also built around my relationship with my partner, Renee,” Chong continues. “She has a strong sense of justice. There’s a line that King George says, ‘You fight for what’s right, you say what’s on your mind, you’re not afraid of anything!’ That’s her. And I think there’s something aspirational about a character like that.”

“One of the notes we were constantly chasing was how to make Mabel more sympathetic,” Grindle agrees. “Piper was the perfect fit–she is so good at the comedy, and when she yells, there’s an undertone of self-awareness that makes it work.”

“Deciding to tell her backstory and show the audience why she loves the animals and where her passion comes from helped people relate to and understand Mabel too,” says head of story John Cody Kim.

Screenwriter Jesse Andrews explains, “On some level, this story is also about loss. One of the first things I pitched was, ‘What if Mabel has lost someone and is now on the verge of losing the place that represents that person to her?’ It gave her something to protect and shows how personal this is for her. And I think we all know a Mabel; it’s someone who goes really hard for what they believe in.”

As Piper Curda puts it, “Mabel is fierce. Mabel is awesome. Mabel is who I wish I could have been at her age. She so firmly knows who she is, knows what she wants and goes for it no matter what. She will do whatever it takes to make the world a better place. It’s been really cool stepping into her energy.”

Mayor Jerry Generazzo (Jon Hamm)
For Mayor Jerry, the goal was to develop a complete character arc with believable, redemptive moments. Although he instigates the main conflict in the film, the team worked hard to redeem him by the end of the story.

“We needed to have conflict to tell an interesting story,” Grindle explains. “And recognizing that we needed to redeem Mayor Jerry changed the storytelling. It took a while to get to a place where Mayor Jerry acknowledges Mabel and it’s believable. The idea that ‘Well, you’re here, I’m here, let’s figure this out together.’ The point of the story is that we all need to work together. We’re all in this together. Those lines really wrap things up.”

“Oh, and another element, of course, was adding Mayor Jerry’s mom,” Grindle adds with a laugh.

“It’s hard to make characters like Mabel and Mayor Jerry who are antagonistic towards each other likable and entertaining enough to want to watch,” adds lead story artist Hannah Roman. “It came together once we figured out their unique quirks and behaviors.”

When it came to casting Jon Hamm as Mayor Jerry, Grindle says: “It was our dream for Jon Hamm to play the role. He understood how to thread the needle and make Mayor Jerry come across as vain and pompous while still finding the humor in it and making him likeable. His performance is so broad–only he could pull that off without tipping into slapstick.”

Insect Queen (Meryl Streep)
When it came to casting the Insect Queen, Meryl Streep was the team’s dream pick for the role.

“We needed the Insect Queen to exude power and presence immediately–and I don’t think we could imagine anyone other than Meryl Streep. We met on Zoom initially, and I pitched her through the film in its early stages. What stood out to me was how much she clearly understood the tone and comedy–and she laughed in all the right places. She also had a soft spot for beavers, thankfully.”

“Meryl Streep was who Daniel had envisioned from the start,” Grindle agrees. “When Daniel pitched her, it was clear she loved the story and what it represented. And she actually pointed out her window and exclaimed, ‘You won’t believe this, but there’s a beaver lodge in that pond!’”

“For all the things I had built up in my mind about how intense it might be to work with Meryl, she was very light and disarming,” says Chong. “There was a playfulness in her process that I loved, and she was very generous in experimenting with different kinds of voices and takes. You really got to see a master at work. Comedy came very naturally to her, and you could tell she had fun doing it.”

Tom Lizard (Tom Law)
The emoji-typing Tom Lizard was first glimpsed on the big screen when he appeared in the viral post-credits scene from Pixar's June 2025 animated adventure "Elio." The "Hoppers" production team had a blast designing the mindless and endearing character voiced by Pixar storyboard artist and animator Tom Law.

"Tom Lizard was always this innocent character who was a little bit behind the ball on what's happening," explains Margaret Spencer. "It was very endearing. The way that [story supervisor] John Cody Kim was drawing and storyboarding him really set that tone. And then of course we had Tom Law, who is head of story on another film happening at Pixar. He was doing the temporary scratch voice and ultimately was cast in the role."

"I feel like Tom Lizard always existed," Hannah Roman agrees with a laugh. "From the beginning, it was just this pure idea. He's this sort of simple, silly character. And Tom Law who voices him has this hilarious way about him. He's a comedic relief character, but his innocence always had huge appeal."

For lighting and compositing supervisor Chia-Chi Hu, it was Tom's simple character design that stood out the most. "I loved Tom from early on with the teaser," she says. "I have a weak spot because his character design is just so simple yet expressive! And every time you look at Tom, he has the funniest body language ever. It's not complicated at all."

Working With Comedians
It's a coincidence–in part due to their pursuit of comedic performances–that so many comedians and "Saturday Night Live" alumni are part of the voice cast.

"We were looking for comedic voices, and that's what guided the folks that we approached," Grindle says. "Vanessa Bayer as Diane the shark was perfect. We couldn't imagine anyone else playing her. Same with Ego Nwodim as the Fish Queen and Melissa Villaseñor as Ellen the bear. We wanted them to be funny and also deliver a performance that was grounded in an emotional reality that wasn't too cartoony. If you think about the way standup comedians do their monologues, it's based on who they are and their reality. They're not putting on a voice, but they're funny. That's what we needed for our team."

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

MABEL TANAKA (Piper Curda)
As a passionate animal-lover who ferociously follows her heart, **Mabel** cares for creatures both big and small but can sometimes lose patience with humankind. Spending time with her gentle and beloved Grandma Tanaka, Mabel finds peace in the beautiful tranquility that nature has to offer, until the very glade she grew up caring for is threatened. Though fighting for those without a voice is completely second nature to Mabel, her plan to bring animals back to the glade proves to be more of a challenge than she expected. Scrappy and fearless in her pursuit,

Mabel will use every tool at her disposal–skateboard included–to stop the destruction of animal homes at the hands of Mayor Jerry.

MABEL BEAVER (Piper Curda)
Mabel Beaver has the same passion for animals, but this time–she is one herself! One glance in a reflective pond confirms that Mabel's consciousness is inside an adorable, small, furry robot beaver. Appropriately disguised, she infiltrates all aspects of the animal world and is PUMPED at the thought of solving the glade's problem with help from within. Forced to think on her tiny webbed feet, Mabel Beaver quickly learns the ropes of her new world by gaining the trust of a strange animal leader, King George.

KING GEORGE (Bobby Moynihan)
King George, a larger-than-life beaver with a jovial personality to match, is the leader of the pond and king of the mammals. Although he didn't set out to be King, he embraces the role with enthusiasm every day and created some rules to help everyone in the pond get along: Pond Rules! Undeniably optimistic and kind, George is a beaver who loves: leading group aerobics, learning everyone's names, working together in harmony and, of course, wood. A lifelong bachelor, he's married to his job–and while anxiety and imposter syndrome have taken a toll on his hairline, there's nothing else he'd rather be doing. When conflicts arise in his community, George just points to his Pond Rules: "We're all in this together!"

MAYOR JERRY GENERAZZO (Jon Hamm)
Running for reelection in Beaverton, **Mayor Jerry Generazzo** thinks he's all that. He's self-obsessed; and yet unbothered when it comes to the moral dealings of his job. Is he painfully self-restrained by red tape and what his constituents think of him? Yes. Will he stop attempting to build a highway through the glade, displacing animals from their homes? No. But under his shiny, perfectly coiffed hair and matching public persona, Jerry is losing his cool over the one thing he can't control: Mabel.

DR. SAM (Kathy Najimy)
Dr. Sam is Mabel's biology professor at Beaverton University. Full of nervous energy, she also happens to be the brilliant inventor and scientist leading the top-secret research project: Hoppers. Though she runs her lab full of janky yet powerful technology with precision, when chaos strikes, she becomes easily flustered. Dr. Sam is determined to use her invention only for good because she knows that if it falls into the wrong hands, the result could be total ecological collapse. So, you could say her anxiety runs pretty high…

TITUS (Dave Franco)
Titus is the demanding, spoiled spawn of the Insect Queen. Squish-thirsty and hungry for power, it's best to stay out of his way while he transforms into an even more entitled version of himself–the Insect King.

LOAF (Eduardo Franco)
Loaf is not the smartest beaver in the pond, nor the sharpest stick in the dam. A slow yet staunch protector of "Pond Rules," even to his own detriment, Loaf is…just trying his best to keep up.

NISHA (Aparna Nancherla)
Nisha is Dr. Sam's astute and loyal colleague. She's second in command at the top-secret lab, and will let you know it. Though Nisha may be on the quieter side, when she does speak, be prepared for her to be brutally and uncomfortably honest with an unamused, deadpan delivery.

TOM LIZARD (Tom Law)
Though **Tom Lizard** prefers to avoid drama at all costs and rise above the fray, his insatiable curiosity typically puts him in the middle of it. Tom may be a little green reptile, but he's got some big animal friends who have his back.

CONNER (Sam Richardson)
Conner is a grad student in biology working at Dr. Sam's top-secret lab. He's cheerful, gregarious and pretty awkward. He doesn't really know how he got himself mixed up in this mess, but he would like out–please.

ELLEN (Melissa Villaseñor)
Ellen is a big, menacing, mostly grumpy bear always on the lookout for her next meal. While she lives by the motto "When you gotta eat, eat," behind that forbidding exterior Ellen is surprisingly community-minded and very loyal to her friends.

BIRD KING (Isiah Whitlock Jr.)
Bird King, with his horrible temper and flighty, flippant attitude, is not afraid to loudly HONK and interject his opinions where he sees fit. Like most geese, he's jumpy, paranoid and loud. Bird King likes to look down upon his fellow Council members, figuratively and literally–as he flies away.

AMPHIBIAN KING (Steve Purcell)
Amphibian King is as cold and slimy as his skin. A frog of few words, he'll slowly croak out bad ideas that are routinely ignored by fellow Council members. He's heartless, but too dense to be malicious.

FISH QUEEN (Ego Nwodim)
Fish Queen is a boisterous, stern and formidable member of the Council. As leader of the fish kingdom, she always has a long-winded speech prepared–but will make everyone wait with a dramatic pause while she goes down for water.

REPTILE QUEENS (Nichole Sakura)
Reptile Queens are a terrifying trio of almost identical snake sisters, ready and willing to bite your head off. Their interests include gossiping, mockery, trying to end Council meetings early because they're boring and stupid, and making fun of other animals for having legs.

INSECT QUEEN (Meryl Streep)
Insect Queen is the most respected and feared member of the all-seeing and all-powerful Council. She rules over her subjects and her spoiled, bloodthirsty son with a tiny iron fist, and the grandeur of a human royal. Her subjects are the most numerous on Earth, and the fact that they are constantly getting eaten by literally everyone else has shaped her bitter, hard-won wisdom and given her no illusions about the nature of power.

GRANDMA TANAKA (Karen Huie)
Grandma Tanaka has always been a calm, empathetic, consistent presence in Mabel's life, and understands her granddaughter when others don't. From a young age, she teaches Mabel about the importance of protecting the beauty and innocence of nature. As a member of the Beaverton Wildlife Society, Grandma Tanaka believes that as long as you take care of those around you, you'll be making a difference.

DIANE (Vanessa Bayer)
Diane the shark is the apex predator summoned to help the Council carry out their mission to stop Mayor Jerry. Though Diane is one of the animal world's most feared assassins, she's actually super sweet, with a flawless bedside manner and a commitment to absolute professionalism. Nothing fazes her–even when she feels like a fish out of water.

PRODUCTION POND RULES

As Mabel is introduced to the beautiful chaos of the animal world as a beaver, King George explains the simple rules that he and his subjects abide by to help keep nature in balance:

Rule 1: Don't be a stranger
Rule 2: When you gotta eat, eat
Rule 3: We're all in this together

When it came to the filmmakers' planned approach for production on "Hoppers," Grindle and Chong decided to establish their own set of values–also called Pond Rules–to help shape how the production team would work together.

"I give so much credit to Nicole and her suggestion that we create Pond Rules for our team," Chong says. "We both wrote out the things we value as leaders, and what we expect from our leadership. We made sure that we lived by them, and it helped set the tone. Everybody knew how to keep us accountable."

“Daniel and I both have a very similar set of values,” Grindle says. “For us, it was really important to build a community where creators feel safe to bring their best work. Having fun is part of that foundation–you don’t want people to be afraid about their performance or worry about being judged. Daniel and I are less hierarchical in our values, and we wanted to celebrate that as well. We promoted that idea, that people at any level in production should feel free to speak up and give their opinions. That worked really well. And Daniel is very accessible, which also helped.”

“It’s a hard process, making a movie at this scale,” Chong continues. “So, to have everyone be able to enjoy each other’s company, and have a mission statement specific to the production, was huge. If the team is having a good time, if they’re laughing and the meetings are enjoyable and we love each other’s company, it shows up on the screen. That was one of the key parts of making the movie–that everyone had fun making it. I hope they did. I know I did.”

The team’s chemistry on set was largely shaped by the production Pond Rules and the ethos established throughout the entire filmmaking process. “We had such a great chemistry on the team and similar senses of humor. We could really feed off of each other,” explains lead story artist Hannah Roman. “It was always so easy to suggest an idea.”

For editor Axel Geddes, the film’s Pond Rules reflected his experience working on “Hoppers” too. “It’s funny, as I look back at this experience of working with my team and working across other departments and their respective areas, the thing that King George says to Mabel and then Mabel says to Mayor Jerry, that ‘we’re all in this together,’ actually feels like how we collaborated.”

Story lead Margaret Spencer agrees. “I hope that audiences see that we had a great time making this movie. One of the really special things about this project is that we were actually having a lot of fun working on it. We were making each other laugh. Daniel was really good at creating a Socratic seminar-style environment and having that balance, working fast with all hands on deck. It was really productive and fun and made everything a lot less precious.”

BEAVER PARTY! RESEARCH AND BEAVER EXPERT DR. EMILY FAIRFAX

The team drew inspiration from nature in many forms–including research trips to Yellowstone, to Colorado with beaver expert and “Hoppers” consultant Dr. Emily Fairfax, PhD, to Fort Collins, and even to the Oakland Zoo.

“We did a lot of field trips,” Chong says. “Early on, our team went to Yellowstone National Park. We spent a week there and had the chance to really immerse ourselves in nature. We had amazing guides who helped embed us in that space. I remember them telling us when we got there, ‘You are now entering the animals’ homes. You are a visitor here.’ That was a really great reset in perspective, where most of the time we feel the opposite in relation to nature being in our spaces.

“We even got to go inside an abandoned beaver lodge,” Chong continues. “It was a tight squeeze! But once you’re in there, you see all these intricate corridors and areas–almost like separate rooms. I think beavers also let other animals chill with them in the lodge if they want. In addition to Yellowstone, our art team also went to Colorado with our beaver specialist, Dr. Emily Fairfax, and had the chance to swim in actual beaver ponds.”

“When Mabel sees nature for the first time through a beaver’s eyes, we wanted it to feel fresh and new. But we also wanted the audience to feel the authenticity and tactility of nature, like being in a place they have been before, to draw them into the story,” production designer Bryn Imagire explains. “We needed to have validity and authenticity. The research and spending time in nature was really important to getting that right.”

As part of the group that went to Yellowstone, Imagire recounts an especially poignant moment that helped shape the film: “There was one morning where we woke up before dawn. Our guide took us out to a very flat area, and we could barely see. He told us to be as quiet as possible and stand out in the open. We realized after our eyes adjusted to the light that we were surrounded by buffalo. Being able to talk with the team about the possibilities of the look of the movie after experiencing this moment together in nature was amazing.”

To ensure the team was accurately portraying beavers and their natural habitats, Dr. Emily Fairfax visited the studio multiple times and led the aforementioned research trip in Colorado to provide background and context about beavers and their influence on their surrounding ecosystems. As a renowned scientist, assistant professor, lecturer and researcher specializing in the field of ecohydrology (the study of the relationship between water and living systems) near rivers–especially those impacted by beaver damming–she was an essential asset for the production team.

“This has been a really novel experience,” says Dr. Fairfax. “I never anticipated this being part of my scientific career, but it’s easily one of the coolest opportunities. I was asked to give a pretty broad intro-to-beavers presentation at Pixar, and shortly after received a request for a follow-up presentation about beavers in specific environments. Over the course of production, I visited the Pixar campus several times and watched early iterations of storyboarding. I’d be asked if things were scientifically accurate or a good representation of beavers. It was really important to me that the folks at Pixar cared so deeply. I care a lot about science communication and about sharing all the amazing things that beavers do. There is no way I could reach as many people through a peer-reviewed paper as will be reached through this movie.”

One of the key beaver facts Dr. Fairfax was excited to amplify is their singular role in nature.

As Dr. Fairfax explains, “Beavers are both a keystone species and an ecosystem engineer, which is a point I make whenever I can. A keystone species means a lot of other plants and animals depend on them, and beavers support an incredible number of different organisms. Ecosystem engineer means that an animal can move into an environment and physically change it to their needs.

“People can build wetlands, and beavers can build wetlands. That’s pretty much it,” Dr. Fairfax continues. “Beavers can move into almost any environment and create a wetland, which means every single plant and animal that needs access to a wetland can find its home in or near a beaver pond.”

“A more recent discovery has been beavers’ value battling forest fires,” Chong adds. “There’s aerial footage of all the land that burns during forest fires–and you’ll often find little patches of green that don’t burn. It turns out that’s where beaver dams and ponds are, because of the wetlands they create. It serves as a refugia for all the biodiversity nearby.”

The natural habitat and wildlife community that beavers help create underscores the overall theme of Pond Rule #3: We’re all in this together.

VISUAL STYLE AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

The team worked tirelessly to create a unique visual style for “Hoppers.” They had to overcome the hurdles associated with animating scenes set in nature and craft a cohesive aesthetic for a huge number of characters and complicated sets. As part of their approach, they developed an all-new technological pipeline.

“I was warned early on that nature is really hard to depict in CG,” Chong says. “If you take a picture outside, it’s quite busy–there’s a lot of information, a lot of visual noise. There’s no order, and it’s not always easy to look at. But we needed to simplify things so we can focus on the characters. The question became, ‘How do you calm down nature and depict it in a way that looks beautiful and recognizable but isn’t distracting?’ There was a lot of coordination across departments to stylize and simplify the shapes and the overall look while making it feel natural.”

“We didn’t want the visual style to be different between the environments and the characters,” says visual effects supervisor Beth Albright. “And there was a question of what to lean into in terms of style, because the tone of the movie was always a little unconventional. We were creating an unpredictable absurdist comedy that’s also a spy thriller with a science fiction undertone. And ultimately, we wanted to immerse the viewer in the beauty of nature. Daniel was super focused on the story he wanted to tell, the tone that he wanted to tell it with, and also gave us a lot of room for exploration.”

To find the right balance between the character and set designs, the lighting and effects artists developed a custom paintbrush workflow–a special paintbrush tool–that allowed them to put brushstrokes on their models and simplify the backgrounds without losing the rich texture of the environments.

Albright says, “The natural world is full of so much detail that, visually, it’s extremely complex and hard to direct the eye. To address that challenge, we did a sort of timeout sprint for three weeks, where everyone stopped what they were doing and dove into whatever their discipline

was–whether it was lighting, characters, effects, sets. Everyone was encouraged to create visuals that they'd always wanted to try. From that exploration, every department created some really interesting and original treatments.

"From there," Albright continues, "we were able to create a brand-new pipeline that could take each individual leaf, turn it into a point, and then replace it with a painted brushstroke. The brushstroke patterns were pulled from shading and lighting art director Hye Sung Park's brush library work in Photoshop. We essentially turned them into little stamps using the color from each sample point. We were able to simplify some of the visual detail without blurring it out or putting a bunch of atmosphere and mist in front of it, which meant we could maintain silhouettes on our characters that were soft and tactile, but clear and expressive."

"The brushstroke technology was a huge development," Grindle says. "The team was able to soften the natural backgrounds so that the characters pop, yet you still feel like you're in nature. It creates a somewhat impressionistic backdrop. Our lighting artists were able to dial that in for each unique shot."

Another challenge was illuminating the nighttime sequences.

"Daniel and I talked about how to simplify nature to fit with the tone of 'Hoppers,'" says Imagire. "Beaver habitats are visually super complex–water, hundreds of trees, lodges and dams made up of many branches. At every step of the way, we had to consider how all of these elements could come together in a charming way. We emphasized big shape silhouettes, scaled up leaves and backgrounds, and took out unnecessary detail.

"As we were working on the color script, a lot of the movie's sequences were going to be set at night," continues Imagire. "To have a comedy with a lot of dark nighttime sequences is a bit challenging–we needed to make sure the night scenes were well illuminated so it wasn't too dark or spooky. Using a longer exposure was how we approached bringing more light into those scenes. If you leave the lens open long enough, you still get the feeling of nighttime but there's a lot more light bouncing off of the characters and their surroundings."

Another challenge was getting the beaver habitat right. The team drew inspiration from their research trip to Colorado, where they saw beavers in their environment with Dr. Emily Fairfax.

Imagire explains, "There were elements of the Pacific Northwest that we were looking at originally and ultimately, we drew inspiration from Colorado thanks to our time with Dr. Fairfax. We were inspired by the combination of aspen groves next to pine forest, which introduced yellows and oranges to the palette. Aspen groves being a single living organism connected by an extensive root system also tied into one of our big themes–that we are all connected. It really led us down a different path."

"It was important for color to have meaning," Imagire says. "To connect Mabel to nature, we reserved green for her jacket. And red represented fire, danger and destruction. It's hard to

control colors like that throughout the whole movie but we worked really hard to do that. Preserving red in a really saturated, high-contrast way for the fire felt really dramatic and bold."

ORIGINAL SCORE BY MARK MOTHERSBAUGH

Composer Mark Mothersbaugh was tapped to create the score for "Hoppers," a serendipitous partnership considering his background as the co-founder of Devo–the popular band satirically named for the concept of de-evolution founded in the 1970s.

"I adore Mark Mothersbaugh," Chong says. "And working with him was one of the most inspirational parts of making this movie. He's such a creative force, and an amazing human being. He was so generous with me in talking about his love for the movie. After he saw an early cut, he connected so deeply with it–comparing many of the themes in the film with what his band Devo was trying to say to the world. I was so humbled by his belief in me and the movie.

"I knew Mark was going to deliver on the funny moments in the movie without question," Chong continues. "But I think the parts of the score that are my favorite are the emotional cues. There is this melody he's using as Mabel's theme that gets more and more heart-wrenching and resonant as the movie goes–and by the time you're at the end of the movie, it hits so hard. To balance all that, with all the comedic and action and synth cues, is a giant feat. I can't imagine anyone else accomplishing what he has with this score–it is so uniquely Mark."

"When I saw an early version of the film, I was struck by it," Mark Mothersbaugh says. "I like the message and, in a way, it's kind of a Devo message. And I love the story. By the time it gets to the music, so many people have put their brain into this film. Daniel, Nicole, the whole team have had so much time to think about it and to reflect and to look at things. I think kids–and everyone, really–will look at this film and they'll relate. It's positive information for them to think about."

ORIGINAL SONG "SAVE THE DAY" BY SZA

Seven-time GRAMMY® Award-winning singer-songwriter SZA was tapped to write the original song "Save The Day," featured during the "Hoppers" end credits. The impactful anthem is performed by SZA, features lyrics by SZA, and music by SZA, Rob Bisel and Ben Lovett. "Save The Day" was produced by Rob Bisel, the GRAMMY® Award-winning producer and songwriter whose collaborators include SZA, Doja Cat, Harry Styles and Kendrick Lamar; and Ben Lovett, one of the GRAMMY® Award-winning founding members of the folk-rock band Mumford & Sons.

For Chong, collaborating with SZA, Bisel and Lovett on "Save The Day" was hugely impactful.

"When we first heard the song, it was incredibly emotional. Some of us cried," Chong attests. "SZA perfectly captured the heart of our main character, Mabel. 'Save the Day' is not just an

emotional journey through Mabel's convictions, but an anthem for a whole generation just looking for some runway to change the world. Our movie is forever grateful to Solána, Rob Bisel and Ben Lovett for this beautiful gift."

FILMMAKER BIOS

DANIEL CHONG (Director)

Daniel Chong joined Pixar Animation Studios in February 2009 as a story artist, and has worked on several short and feature productions including the "Cars Toons" TV special "Toy Story of TERROR!" and the feature film "Cars 2." He also worked on the Academy Award®-winning film "Inside Out."

Prior to joining Pixar, Chong worked as a story artist for Disney Feature Animation, Blue Sky, Nickelodeon and Illumination. Most recently he was the creator of the Emmy®-nominated TV series "We Bare Bears" for Cartoon Network, which ran for four seasons. "We Bare Bears: The Movie" was released in 2020.

Growing up in Orange County, Calif., Chong earned a BFA from Cal State Long Beach and also attended CalArts. Chong currently resides in Berkeley, Calif.

NICOLE PARADIS GRINDLE (Producer)

Nicole Paradis Grindle joined Pixar Animation Studios in 1995 as producer of the "Toy Story Activity Center" interactive computer game. Since then she has played various production management and producer roles on many of Pixar's feature films, including "A Bug's Life," "Monsters, Inc.," "Monsters University" and Academy Award®-winning films "The Incredibles," "Ratatouille" and "Toy Story 3." She produced the feature film "Incredibles 2," which grossed over $1.2 billion in global box office. Grindle is currently producing Pixar's upcoming feature film "Hoppers," set to release in theaters on March 6, 2026.

In 2015, Grindle produced the short film "Sanjay's Super Team," for which she was nominated for an Academy Award®. In addition to her film work, she has played numerous organizational roles in the studio, producing commercials, broadcast television shorts and promotional material. In 2014, Grindle partnered with Pixar colleague Mary Coleman to create a mentoring program for potential women directors, which bore fruit with the premiere of director Domee Shi's Academy Award®-winning 2018 short film "Bao."

Grindle came to Pixar with many years of animation production experience. She began her feature film career at Industrial Light & Magic on "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" and then moved to (Colossal) Pictures, where she produced numerous projects including MTV's groundbreaking short segment "Aeon Flux," which was featured on the program "Liquid Television."

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Grindle graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and holds a master of arts degree in documentary film from Stanford University. At Penn, she was a

writer, actor, director and chair of the all-women's sketch comedy group Bloomers, only learning later in life the genius of delegation. She currently resides in San Francisco.

MARK MOTHERSBAUGH (Composer)
Mark Mothersbaugh is a GRAMMY®-, BAFTA- and Emmy®-nominated composer, producer, designer and visual artist whose work has become part of the pop culture consciousness. He started his career as the musical architect and front many of the seminal, GRAMMY-nominated new wave band Devo. Their Brian Eno/David Bowie-produced debut album "Q: Are We Not Men? A: We are Devo!" was certified gold before their hit album "Freedom of Choice" went platinum.

Through the years, Mothersbaugh has transformed into an award-winning composer for film and television. His credits include a range of film and television projects from "Pee-wee's Playhouse," "Rugrats," "The Royal Tenenbaums," "The Lego Movie," and "Thor: Ragnarok" and, most recently, "A Minecraft Movie." Mothersbaugh has also created the sound for many award-winning commercials and video games. He continues to perform with Devo and can be seen as the art teacher on the popular children's show "Yo Gabba Gabba!"

SZA (Original Song "Save The Day" – Music, Lyrics, Performed by)
SZA, the seven-time GRAMMY® Award-winning singer and songwriter, has achieved global prominence with her distinctive musical style and emotionally raw, introspective lyrics. Her Top Dawg Entertainment/RCA Records debut album, "Ctrl," was a commercial and critical success, earning five GRAMMY nominations. RIAA-certified 5x Platinum, "Ctrl" features the Diamond-certified hit "Love Galore" and several multi-platinum songs. SZA's sophomore album, "SOS," along with its expanded version, "SOS Deluxe: LANA," both debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and spent 13 non-consecutive weeks at the top spot. Currently RIAA-certified 8x Platinum, "SOS" became the first album by a female artist to spend 100 weeks in the Top 10 and surpassed Michael Jackson's "Thriller" as the longest-running Top 10 album by a Black artist in Billboard 200 chart history. Across all platforms, SZA has amassed over 70 billion streams worldwide.

SZA's career is marked by significant accolades, including Academy Award® and Golden Globe® Award nominations. She has secured over 70 wins, including two GRAMMY® Awards this year for "luther," her chart-topping collaboration with Kendrick Lamar, which won the coveted Record of the Year honor. Her recent co-headlining Grand National Tour with Kendrick Lamar stands as the most successful duo tour in history. Beyond her musical achievements, SZA made her big-screen debut in the 2025 comedy film "One of Them Days," which topped the box office at No. 1. In 2025, SZA launched NOT Beauty, her cruelty-free, gluten-free and vegan makeup line, and was named Vans' Artistic Director to co-create exclusive product collections. SZA continues to exemplify fearless creativity, a testament to her immense popularity and record-shattering achievements.

CAST AND ADDITIONAL FILMMAKER BIOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST